

Mr. Speaker, now more than ever we must make a fundamental shift in the way we think about nuclear weapons, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and our national security. My bill will authorize the Department of Defense to expand their cooperative threat reduction programs outside of the former Soviet Union.

URGING THE FCC TO RELEASE ITS TRIENNIAL REVIEW

HON. MICHAEL BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 9, 2003

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the inaction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regarding the Triennial Review of the 1996 Telecommunications Act adopted on February 20, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of where members come down on the issue of local telephone competition, one thing is clear to all of us; NO ONE has seen the order which was adopted more than two months ago. If the House of Representatives considers legislation pertaining to this matter, we should have the actual document to review before we vote.

The FCC adopted rules dealing with local telephone competition more than two months ago that have yet to be put to paper so that the affected companies can review the order, and the telecommunications industry is hemorrhaging. Jobs, capital investment and investor equity are being squandered at an unprecedented rate. This lack of clarity is prolonging this downward spiral. Many have referred to the chaos and uncertainty in the industry caused by this order. While some of this may be rhetoric, every day that goes by adds more credence to the fact that the delay in the release of this order is detrimental to the telecommunications industry.

I urge the FCC to release its Triennial Review as soon as possible.

YOUNG ISRAEL HONORS LANCE KAWESCH AND EMILY STEIN

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 9, 2003

Mr. FRANK. Mr. Speaker, on this coming Sunday, May 11, Young Israel of Brookline, Massachusetts will honor Lance Kawesch and Emily Stein, "for the years of excellent service, tireless devotion and total dedication to Young Israel and our community."

Mr. Kawesch and Ms. Stein joined Young Israel shortly after their marriage, and have been hard working and valuable members of the Congregation ever since. Lance has served as President, and Emily is the Office Manager and Director of Operations. Between them, they have organized, supported, and contributed to a wide range of the important educational, religious, charitable and cultural activities which mark the work of Young Israel. Young Israel is a vibrant part of the district

which I represent, and I am pleased to have the chance to join the members of Young Israel in saluting the important work of Lance Kawesch and Emily Stein.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN BELARUS AND CHECHNYA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 9, 2003

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, as Co-Chairman of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe, I have followed with particular concern both the deadly climate in Chechnya and the deterioration of human rights in Belarus. Such violations of basic human rights deserve focused criticism, and it is appropriate that the agenda of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights included resolutions on each situation.

On April 17, the U.N. Commission voted 23-14 with 16 abstentions to approve a U.S.-cosponsored resolution urging the Belarusian authorities to investigate "fully and impartially" credible reports that senior government officials were involved in the disappearances in 1999 and 2000 of leading opposition figures and a journalist.

I have followed these cases closely and have become increasingly frustrated at the Belarusian regime's intransigence in meaningfully investigating these disappearances. Here in Washington and at OSCE Parliamentary Assembly meetings in Paris and Berlin, I have had occasion to meet with the wives of the disappeared. These meetings have been heart-wrenching. The cases of their husbands—who disappeared in 1999 and 2000 and are presumed to have been murdered—offer a chilling glimpse into the nature of the regime of Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko, a regime that has the worst human rights record in Europe today. In February, I introduced H.R. 854, the Belarus Democracy Act, designed to bolster democratic development in that beleaguered country, and I am pleased that the State Department authorization bill approved yesterday by the House International Relations Committee includes key provisions of the Belarus Democracy Act. This bill encourages sanctions against the Belarusian regime until certain conditions are met, including a full accounting of these tragic disappearances.

The Belarusian people deserve to live in a society where democratic principles and human rights are respected and the rule of law is paramount, and I believe that the passage of the U.N. Human Rights Commission resolution is an important step towards that end.

Mr. Speaker, I wish I could report that the U.N. Commission on Human Rights had acted with equal conscience on the issue of Chechnya. We all know the desperate human rights situation in that war-torn region of the Russian Federation. Since the Chechen war reignited in 1999, international and domestic Russian human rights organizations have documented the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by elements of the Russian military, as well as extrajudicial killings, abuse

of prisoners, kidnaping, rape, and extortion of civilians. According to official statistics, 2,800 persons are missing in Chechnya; mutilated bodies of young Chechen males turn up almost daily. A representative of the respected human rights organization Memorial reported at a recent Helsinki Commission briefing that "one of the recent tendencies is to explode the corpses" in order to prevent identification. Needless to say, all of this is in clear violation of the Geneva Convention and the OSCE Code of Conduct during internal conflicts.

What's left of the Chechen capital of Grozny after Russian artillery shelling has been compared to the ruins of Stalingrad in 1943. According to the U.N., there are 92,000 internally displaced persons forced to flee from the fighting, with around 17,000 living in tent camps in neighboring Ingushetia.

Chechen forces are not entirely blameless. There are credible reports of their executing prisoners and using non-combatants as human shields. They have also assassinated pro-Moscow Chechen officials. The U.S. Government has placed three militant groups involved in the Chechen resistance on its list of terrorist groups.

Still, is this an excuse for Russia's savage war against the civilian population?

Despite all the documentation and eyewitness testimony on egregious human rights violations committed in Chechnya, the Commission on Human Rights rejected by a vote of 15-21 an even-handed European Union resolution expressing deep concern at the reported ongoing violations of international law in Chechnya. I note that the U.S. delegation did not cosponsor the resolution, though it did support it when the measure came to a vote. We should not be surprised that China, Sudan and Zimbabwe voted against the resolution. I do find it disconcerting, though, that the delegations of Armenia and Ukraine are in that less than distinguished company.

Ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick, Head of the U.S. Delegation to the U.N. Commission noted: "The United States believes it important that the Commission address the serious human rights abuses that have occurred in Chechnya. We recognize Russia's right to defend its territorial integrity and itself against terrorism. The broader conflict in Chechnya cannot be resolved militarily and requires a political solution. Human rights violations by Russian forces in Chechnya need to be curtailed, and abusers held accountable."

So the people of Chechnya continue to suffer, and the U.N. Commission on Human Rights looks the other way.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 9, 2003

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, on April 29, 2003 through May 1, 2003, due to medical reasons, I was unable to cast my floor vote on rollcall Nos. 146 through 158.

Had I been present for the votes, I would have voted "aye" on rollcall votes 146, 147, 148, 150, and 158; and I would have voted "nay" on rollcall votes 149, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, and 157.